

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 MANAMA 00383 111803Z

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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P R 111358Z APR 76

FM AMEMBASSY MANAMA BAHRAIN
TO SECSTATE WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY 2906
INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA SAUDI ARABIA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN IRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAMA 0383

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS : MARR, BA

SUBJECT : MIDDLE EAST FORCE STATUS

REFERENCE : MANAMA 370

1. INQUIRING ABOUT GOB FOREIGN MINISTER'S STATEMENT TO PRESS
IN KUWAIT RE MIDDLE EAST FORCE PRESENCE (REFTEL) GAVE ME
EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY TO PROBE GOB THINKING RE MID-1977
DEADLINE FOR U.S. NAVY'S DEPARTURE.

2. STRESSING THAT I WAS SPEAKING PERSONALLY AND NOT UNDER
ANY INSTRUCTIONS, I ASKED IF GOB INTENDED TO REVIEW ITS
DECISION. FOREIGN MINISTER REPLIED THAT DECISION TO ASK NAVY
TO LEAVE BY MID-1977 HAD BEEN PAINFULLY AND CAREFULLY TAKEN
AND THAT NOTHING HAD CHANGED TO WARRANT REVIEWING IT.
RATHER SURPRISINGLY HE THEN ASKED IF USG HAD "MADE ANY PROGRESS
IN THE REGION" ON MUSTERING GULF STATES' SUPPORT FOR MIDDLE
EAST FORCE. I TOLD HIM THAT, WHILE I HAD NO SPECIFIC CURRENT
INFORMATION, I WAS CONFIDENT NEITHER SAUDI ARABIA NOR IRAN
WOULD OBJECT TO EXTENSION OF MIDDLE EAST FORCE PRESENCE IN
BAHRAIN BEYOND 1977. FOREIGN MINISTER SAID GOB KNEW THAT AND
THAT WAS NOT THE QUESTION HE HAD ASKED. HE ADDED THAT
QUESTION WAS WHETHER IRAN OR SAUDI ARABIA WOULD PUBLICLY
URGE RETENTION MIDDLE EAST FORCE.

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PAGE 02 MANAMA 00383 111803Z

3. I SHIFTED QUESTION TO POSSIBILITY EXTENDING DEADLINE NOTING THAT MAINTAINING INDIAN OCEAN PRESENCE WITHOUT BAHRAIN FACILITIES OBVIOUSLY POSED INCONVENIENCE TO U.S. NAVY. WHILE I HAD NO INSTRUCTIONS OR INDICATIONS ONE WAY OR THE OTHER, IT WAS NOT UNTHINKABLE THAT U.S. NAVY WOULD FIND A DEPARTURE DATE OF SAY 1978 SUBSTANTIALLY EASIER TO COMPLY WITH THAN MID-1977. FOREIGN MINISTER REPLIED GOB UNDERSTOOD AND REGRETTED THE DEPARTURE FROM BAHRAIN WOULD INCONVENIENCE U.S. NAVY. FOR THIS REASON GOB HAD GIVEN US TWO YEAR "WARNING" SO AS TO MINIMIZE INCONVENIENCE AND TO AVOID NEED FOR ANY REQUEST TO EXTEND DEADLINE.

4. COMMENT: IN VIEW OF ABOVE, WE NEED TO DECIDE QUICKLY WHAT, IF ANY, FORMAL STEPS USG SHOULD TAKE TO TERMINATE STATIONING AGREEMENT. AT PRESENT, WE HAVE A CONFIDENTIAL NOTICE OF INTENT FROM GOB REFERRING TO A PUBLISHED GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT AGREEMENT. THERE IS NO QUESTION GOB CAN AND WILL CONSTRUE ITS AUGUST 12, 1975 LETTER AS SUFFICIENT NOTICE OF TERMINATION, BARRING FURTHER EXCHANGE OF UNCLASSIFIED TERMINATION NOTICE. WE MUST ANTICIPATE, HOWEVER, THAT GOB MAY TRY TO SET THE PUBLIC RECORD STRAIGHT BY SERVING US TERMINATION NOTICE NOT LATER THEN END OF DECEMBER THIS YEAR. IF WE WISH TO PRE-EMPT GOB TO MAKE RECORD SHOW THAT WE SERVED NOTICE OF TERMINATION, WE COULD DO SO ANY TIME AFTER JUNE 30, 1976. TO DO SO WOULD HAVE COSMETIC MERIT, PARTICULARLY FROM HISTORIC STANDPOINT. I WOULD NOT OVERLY STRESS THIS ARGUMENT, HOWEVER, IN LIGHT OF FREQUENT PUBLIC INDICATIONS SINCE LAST SEPTEMBER THAT GOB ASKED U.S. NAVY TO LEAVE AND BECAUSE PRESENT WORDING OF NAVY'S LEASING ARRANGEMENT APPEARS TO TIE UP ANY LEGAL LOOSE ENDS SHOULD MIDDLE EAST FORCE LEAVE IN JUNE 1977 WITHOUT EXCHANGE OF FORMAL NOTICE TO TERMINATION OF STATIONING AGREEMENT. PLEASE ADVISE. END COMMENT

5. DEPARTMENT MAY WISH TO PASS THIS MESSAGE TO SECDEF, CNO, CINCUSNAVEUR, USCINCEUR AND COMIDEASTFOR.

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